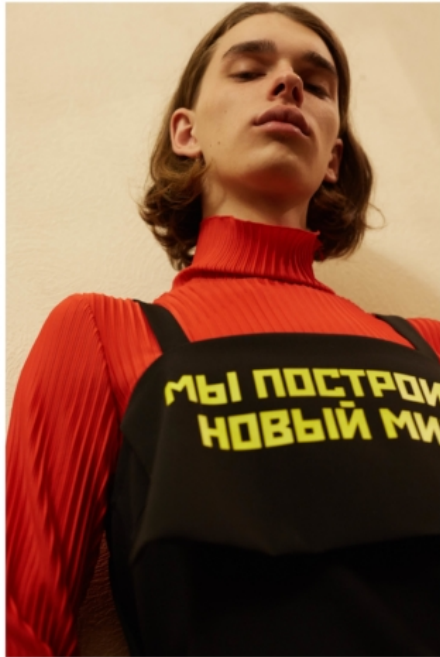


# Post-Soviet 1990s inspiring global fashion trend

By Maria Romanenko. Published Oct. 8, 2016. Updated Oct. 8 2016 at 2:47 pm



Models pose for Yulia Yefimtchuk+ Fall/Winter 16/17 collection lookbook.  
Photo by Julie Poly

For many Ukrainians, the post-Soviet 1990s bring back memories of rising crime, poverty and excessive drinking, but conversely, the wild 1990s have now inspired a whole new international fashion movement.

Olga Sushko, the new editor-in-chief of Vogue Ukraine, noted the genesis of this new trend in the editor's letter of the October issue of the magazine.

“(In the 1990s) street-style mavens were making their first attempts at creating ‘anti-Soviet’ fashion, borrowing ideas from western designers and wearing clothes they made themselves using European models as inspiration,” Sushko writes.

And now fashionistas worldwide have shifted their attention from the usual fashion hotbeds like Paris and Milan to the less obviously fashionable Eastern bloc countries, all of which have been shaped by their Soviet-bloc past. Brands like Georgia's Vetements are coming to the fore, and Ukrainian designers have also picked up on the trend.

“The people who create these (post-Soviet) garments come from Eastern European countries, so it is in our blood,” says Yulia Yefimtchuk, a prominent Ukrainian designer who says she gets her inspiration from the Eastern bloc aesthetics.

Among Ukrainian designers, that inspiration is also shared by Anton Belinskiy, whose designs display an obvious post-Soviet vibe. American Vogue's Liana Satenstein even predicts Belinskiy will “take over the world.” And Ukrainian fashion pioneer Lilia

Poustovit also tuned into the 1990s vibe to create her Poustovit x Tago collection, which combines the best of the 1990s with current trends: leopard prints, hoodies, leather, velvet, athletic elements, shoulder pads and Cyrillic slogans.

Yefimtchuk creates designs that include elements from the Soviet Union's school uniform (which the designer had to wear herself as a child), strong forms with hidden femininity, and street wear with Cyrillic slogans.

In her latest collection, she uses a combination of sleek fabrics and jacquard print, with decorations in the form of badges, prints, patches and the Soviet-era slogan "We will build a new world," written in Russian.



In her latest collection, Yulia Yefimtchuk uses a combination of sleek fabrics and jacquard print, with decorations in the form of badges, prints, patches and the Soviet-era slogan "We will build a new world," written in Russian.

"There are too many slogans in English already... and Cyrillic slogans are worn and loved by foreign fashionistas, because they look new and fresh," says Yefimtchuk.

"These slogans interest foreigners, and make them want to discover and follow these trends. Maybe it will inspire them to learn Slavic languages and explore the culture of Eastern European countries, including Ukraine's," the designer said.

Yefimtchuk is quickly making an impact on the European fashion industry, with her

brand Yulia Yefimtchuk+ showcasing at many highly respected fashion events, including the Hyeres festival in France, where in 2014 her F/W 14/15 collection gained an opening ceremony distinction.



A photo from Yulia Yefimtchuk+ Fall/Winter 16/17 collection lookbook.

With a noticeable hint of sadness, the designer says wealthy Ukrainians are not yet ready to splash out on Ukrainian designs. She says her collections sell better abroad, confirming the rising international interest in the trend.

“From time to time foreigners want to know what is happening in Eastern Europe,” she says of the popularity of her collections abroad.

“For example, there was a lot of interest in Russian avant-garde and Ukrainian artists at the beginning of the 20th century, when fashion (here) as we know it was just being born. And today the West probably wants new emotions and impressions again.”

Despite coming from western Ukraine and speaking immaculate Ukrainian, Yefimtchuk describes herself as a global citizen, free from politics and social burdens, and she thinks of her customers as free people too.

The designer says that in using Soviet slogans, she is not harking back to ideas of Communism, but timeless sayings that reflect the lives and morals of humanity. Yefimtchuk regards these slogans as still relevant today: people are forgetting about real values and exchanging them for material ones, she says.

“Humans should appreciate each other more, and then maybe this new world will be built,” she says.

*Yulia Yefimtchuk’s designs can be purchased in “Atelier 1” concept store in Kyiv. The average price of an item is Hr 5,000. A t-shirt costs Hr 700.*